**COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**
Colchester, CT

## POLICY COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING

**Wednesday, March 23, 2022**
**BOE Policy Committee Special Meeting 5:30 PM**
**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Donna Antonacci, Mary Tomasi, Margo Gignac

**ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:** Superintendent Jeffrey Burt, Principal of William J. Johnston Middle School Christopher Bennett, Colchester Elementary School Principal Judy O'Meara, and Jack Jackter Intermediate School Principal Elise Butson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** None

**1. CALL TO ORDER**
1.1 Call to Order
Chair Antonacci called the meeting to order at 5:32PM

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**
2.1 Public Comment
None.

**3. *APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
3.1 Approval of February 16, 2022 Minutes
**Motion by:** M.Tomasi
To approve the minutes of the February 16, 2022 Policy Committee Meeting
**Second by:** M.Gignac
**Vote:** Unanimous
**Roll call:** Mary Tomasi, Margo Gignac, Donna Antonacci

**4. *PRIORITY DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:**
**POLICIES/REGULATIONS FOR A FIRST READING**
4.1 Series 5000P/R Attire and Hygiene
Committee discussed the attire and hygiene policy revision to bring in uniforms for William J. Johnston Middle School and Bacon Academy. Mary Tomasi asked about first amendment rights regarding expression. Superintendent Burt said uniform policies have been approved. Ms. Tomasi asked if this was vetted to parents, PTOs, etc. Chair Antonacci said she spoke to the Superintendent about doing a possible survey but wanted to see how the committee felt. Superintendent Burt stated he spoke to administrators at

the schools and they felt if one school had uniforms, all schools should have them. He also recommended that if the board moves forward with uniforms that it will not start until the fall of 2023.

Margo Gignac said she has heard from parents that it would level the playing field. Ms. Gignac said she has mixed feelings about it.

Ms. Tomasi asked how many schools in the state have a uniform policy. Superintendent Burt said he can do research on this and bring it back to the next committee meeting.

Christopher Bennett stated he reached out to the principals group through Learn (about 30-40 members) and said the only one that responded that they did uniforms was River Academy in East Hartford. Mr. Bennett stated that dress code is not a huge issue at WJJMS. Colchester has a fairly strict dress code and does a good job enforcing it. Mr. Bennett stated at most it is 1-2 kids a day. Mr. Bennett said he thinks it is a community and Board of Education decision and would expect a lot of people to show up to debate the issue. Chair Antonacci asked Mr. Bennett what his personal opinion was. Mr. Bennett said for 99% of the kids 99% of the time they are dressed appropriately for school. Mr. Bennett reiterated that he thinks it's a community and board decision.

Elise Butson said she cannot recall a dress code violation in her tenure. Ms. Butson said she could reach out to teachers to see if they have seen anything in the classroom. Ms. Butson said she agrees with Mr. Bennett that it is a community and board decision.

Judy O'Meara stated that she agrees with Mr. Bennett and Ms. Butson as well.

Chair Antonacci said that at the very least clothing racist in nature should be forbidden.

Superintendent Burt shared a recent survey that was done by Norwich families and students on uniforms.

The committee asked to survey the Colchester families on their thoughts regarding uniforms. Chair Antonacci said she will work on questions and send them to the Superintendent.

4.2 5131.91P/R Hazing
Superintendent Burt said this was a recommendation from the Director of Teaching and Learning Dr. Charles Hewes based on the recent Title IX investigation. The Superintendent said there is some overlap with the bullying policy but if there is something happening on the team as a whole it allows the district to enforce some elements not covered. It also shows that the administration and board takes what happened seriously and has put policies in place to control this behavior in the future.

Chair Antonacci said she would like the policy looked at further after the Title IX investigation but does not want to wait two months to put the policy in place. The committee asked that the policy be vetted by the board attorney as well. Superintendent

Burt will reach out to the attorney and then bring it back for a second reading for the Committee.

4.3 6162.6P Use of Copying Devices
Superintendent Burt said there have been lawsuits recently in regard to copyrighted material and stated this revision protects the district and the board. Superintendent Burt said it also protects students and teachers who copy material under "fair use" law.

**Motion by:** M.Tomasi
To move 6162.6P Use of Copying Devices to the full board for a first reading.
**Second by:** M.Gignac
**Vote:** Unanimous
**Roll call:** Margo Gignac, Mary Tomasi, Donna Antonacci

4.4 6162.51P Surveys of Students
Chair Antonacci said she believes if students do not want to participate in a survey they should not have to. Margo Gignac said the language is just protecting the child that they cannot receive a survey in regard to any of the items listed without parental consent. Chair Antonacci said she would like to look at it again.

The committee will bring the policy back for continued discussion.

4.5 9123B Secretary of the Board
The committee discussed the changes to the policy and discussion was had in regard to communication including social media.

**Motion by:** M.Gignac
To move 9123B Secretary of the Board to the full board for a first reading.
**Second by:** M.Tomasi
**Vote:** Unanimous
**Roll call:** Margo Gignac, Mary Tomasi, Donna Antonacci

**5. OTHER POLICIES REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION (NONE)**
None.

**6. *CONTINUED DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**
6.1 3451.3P Transportation
Policy to remain under continued discussion and Superintendent and Director of Educational Operations Mario Hurtado will bring forth future recommendations.

6.2 6115P Ceremonies and Observances
Policy tabled; Chair Antonacci will continue researching policy language.

**7. *NON-SUBSTANTIVE POLICIES**
None.

**8. *POLICIES/REGULATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR REMOVAL**

None.

**9. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NEW ISSUES RAISED OR SUBJECTS DEVELOPED**

None.

**10. ESTABLISH NEXT MEETING AGENDA PRIORITIES**

Continue with 6000 Series including 6115P Ceremonies and Observances, 6162.51P Surveys of Students as well as Series 5000PR Attire and Hygiene, 5131.91P/R Hazing, and Transportation policy

**11. ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 6:37PM